

Christianity grew out of Judaism. In about 29 CE a Jew named Jesus began to preach in Galilee. He attracted many followers because of his healing powers and his religious teachings. But Roman officials feared that he might lead an uprising, and they put him to death. The Bible holds that Jesus rose from the dead three days after being put to death.

For many years, Jesus' followers continued to practice religion in the same way as Jews, except they believed that Jesus was a savior sent from God. One holy Christian church formed, spread by Jesus' Apostles like Peter, Paul, and Mark. Christianity was made the official religion of the Roman Empire around 380 CE.

As Christianity expanded, it did not remain unified. In 1054 the Eastern church at Constantinople separated from the Western church in Rome because of differences in beliefs and practices. This split created the Eastern Orthodox churches and the Roman Catholic church. (Remember the Roman Empire split into an eastern and western half and the capital moved to Constantinople. The Hagia Sofia church was the seat of this Orthodox branch of Christianity.)

The Roman Catholic church remained strong in Western Europe, was based in Rome, and was headed by the Pope.

In 1517, a German priest named Martin Luther began to question certain practices and teachings of the Roman Catholic church. Luther's criticism helped bring about the religious revolution known as the Reformation. As a result, various reformers eventually founded the first Protestant churches.

